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ABSTRACT

The Texas Education Agency initiated the Adult Education Professional Development and Curriculum Consortium in 1994. The nine members involved in the consortium are postsecondary institutions, including a community college, an education service center, and a community-based organization. The focus of the consortium's professional development services is on the implementation of the Texas Indicators of Program Quality. Consortium members consult with each other and collaborate to provide professional development and curriculum services. Each of the member organizations is charged with one or more areas of statewide responsibility: professional development and training of adult education teachers; curriculum development; English as a second language; the education component of the federal Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program; family literacy; volunteer professional development; coordination with corrections; resource center services; and consortium liaison services. Primary projects of the consortium include the following: (1) professional development and technical assistance; (2) curriculum and materials development; (3) special projects (Project Forward part of implementation of the JOBS program) and Project VITAL, which provides inservice training and technical assistance to literacy instructors and administrators); (4) writing Texas Indicators of Program Quality as mandated in the National Literacy Act of 1991; and (5) the Adult Education and Literacy Performance Assessment System. (A list of the consortium members is appended.) (KC)

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Using the Consortium Model to Address Statewide Literacy Needs

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BACKGROUND

Section 353 of the National Literacy Act places great emphasis on professional development of adult educators. The Act's professional development focus is on "professional teachers, volunteers, and administrators with particular emphasis on full-time professional adult educators...and educators of adults with limited English proficiency." The Act mandated a setaside of no less than ten percent of a state's grant for professional development activities.

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Beginning in fiscal year 1990, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Division of Adult and Community Education, funded projects to support curriculum development in adult education. From 1990 through 1992, curricula were initiated for adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), adult secondary education, and the adult education component of the federal Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program. In fiscal year 1992, the agency also began to support a regional approach to professional development by funding projects in three regions of the state. Each region had its own project for adult basic education and ESOL professional development services in addition to the professional development available through the curriculum development projects.

Regional professional development projects were funded during fiscal years 1992 and 1993, along with the curriculum projects. As the projects provided services, each began to realize the need for collaboration with the other projects in order to maximize professional development services and meet the needs of local programs.

Organizational Model

In fiscal year 1994, the Adult Education Professional Development and Curriculum Consortium (the Consortium) was initiated. Contractors involved in the Consortium are post secondary institutions, including a community college, an education service center and a community-based organization. The focus of the consortium's professional development services is on the implementation of the Texas Indicators of Program Quality adopted by the State Board of Education in June 1993. The Consortium provides professional development for adult education and literacy personnel.

As the Consortium model was being developed, TEA staff recognized the need for a central point

of contact for Consortium services. One member of the Consortium is funded for a staff position that functions as a Consortium liaison --- an individual who has the capacity to provide technical assistance to local programs to match their professional development needs to the most appropriate Consortium services and contractors. In addition, the liaison functions as the professional staff person for the Consortium, conducting such tasks as coordinating an evaluation of the Consortium or coordinating the development of the Consortium brochure.

Although members contract individually with TEA, the Consortium is designed to function as a whole. Members regularly consult with each other and collaborate to provide professional development and curriculum services. Regular Consortium meetings are held to discuss issues that affect the entire Consortium.

The Consortium is composed of a total of nine member organizations, all of which subscribe to a similar philosophy of education that promotes holistic, learner-centered, and participatory education. Each of these member organizations is charged with one or more areas of state-wide responsibility: Professional development and training of adult education teachers (either adult basic education or English for speakers of other languages); curriculum development (adult basic education/adult secondary education; English for speakers of other languages; or the education component of the federal Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program, Project FORWARD); family literacy assistance; volunteer professional development; coordination with corrections; resource center services; and Consortium liaison services. As well, one member organization is responsible for regional coordination of professional development for the Houston metropolitan area only. (A list of member organizations and their specific responsibilities may be found in Appendix A.)

PRIMARY PROJECTS

Professional Development and Technical Assistance

There is a great need for the continuing professional development of Texas' adult literacy practitioners. While most are dedicated and hardworking, few have formal training in adult literacy education. The Consortium addresses this need by providing a variety of professional development opportunities (at no cost to practitioners or individual programs) which include conference presentation, state-wide and regional institutes, on-site institutes, and on-site assistance.

Each professional development project has developed a variety of stand-alone sessions available for conferences, for state and regional institutes, and for on-site institutes. These usually address the needs of newer, less experienced teachers. Program administrators may schedule these sessions for their teaching staff. When requested, Consortium members are available for follow-up technical assistance designed to address specific needs of teachers, often including in-class demonstrations and work.

As well, the Consortium works with individual programs, assisting administrators and other instructional leaders in the development of comprehensive, long-range, needs-based professional development plans. The Consortium then customizes its training to meet the organization's varied and unique needs.

Curriculum and Materials Development.

Beginning in 1990, three curriculum development projects, which subsequently became part of the Consortium, were initiated: Project FORWARD, the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Curriculum, and the Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education (ABE/ASE) Curriculum. Each of these projects was initiated to respond to different needs.

Project FORWARD, for instance, grew out of Texas' JOBS Program, a federally funded program initiated in 1990 designed to reduce long-term welfare dependency by providing recipients with job

skills, education, and support services designed to help them get and keep jobs. As part of an interagency collaboration, TEA volunteered to fund a special project to develop a life skills educational curriculum, Project FORWARD, which was specifically designed to meet the needs of the welfare population. While the primary aim of Project FORWARD was to address the educational needs of welfare mothers, it frequently is adapted to meet the needs of their populations of students, including those in corrections facilities, the homeless, and those in general adult education classes. A more detailed description of Project FORWARD follows in the Special Projects section.

The ESOL Curriculum initially was developed to respond to the needs of the Amnesty Program, a program in which persons who had lived in this country illegally for a specified amount of time were granted amnesty, and were allowed to apply for citizenship. Part of the process of becoming a citizen involved preparing for a citizenship test given in English. As well, many of the immigrants were in need of basic survival skills. The ESOL Curriculum, which focused on learning English skills in functional contexts, addressed these needs. Although the Amnesty Program no longer exists, the number of immigrants who need basic education in Texas continues to grow. The ESOL Curriculum, which is revised from time to time, continues to fill this need.

The ABE/ASE Curriculum, funded at the same time as the other two curricula, was developed to address the needs of the general population of adult literacy students. This curriculum features user-friendly holistic lessons at the basic, intermediate, and secondary levels.

Staff members from each of the curriculum projects work with teachers through institutes, follow-up training, and technical assistance to ensure the effective implementation and local adaptation of the curricula.

The Adult Basic Education Teacher's Tool Kit, a joint project of all the Consortium member organizations, is a manual designed to help the adult basic education teachers implement a

learner-centered, participatory, holistic framework for adult learning. It is especially useful for new teachers by answering commonly asked questions, providing a model for facilitating adult learning in a holistic classroom, and providing practical suggestions ---"toolboxes" --- in the areas of reading, writing and computing.

SPECIAL PROJECTS: FORWARD AND VITAL

Project FORWARD

Developed by the Literacy and Workforce Development program at El Paso Community College, Project FORWARD is funded by the TEA and offers a life skills curriculum to adult education and literacy providers to meet the needs of JOBS participants and adult students in literacy programs across the state. The objectives of Project FORWARD are (1) to develop a life planning, integrated basic skills curriculum for use in adult basic, adult secondary, and Limited English Proficiency programs; (2) To conduct teacher training and follow-up technical assistance to help adult education instructors effectively implement the curriculum; and (3) To assist local programs with incorporating strategies for assessing progress in acquiring academic and life skills. The Project FORWARD curriculum specifically addresses the Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education and Literacy Programs in the areas of Learner Outcomes and Curriculum and Instruction. The 100 lessons stress the importance of developing academic skills and real world competencies that allow learners access to education and training opportunities for high performance in the workplace. Instructional units are available in the following areas: personal discovery, money matters, communication, family and child care, school and education, health and nutrition, culture, career, community, and empowerment.

The FORWARD curriculum can be implemented to meet the specific requirements of the JOBS legislation or it can be adapted to meet the educational needs of students in Even Start Family Literacy, Adult Education for the homeless, and adult and community education classrooms.

Classes are organized so that participants learn in group and individualized instructional settings. Reading and writing assignments emphasize real life and job-related tasks and address issues and concerns from students' work lives, home lives, and communities. Specific learner objectives include: developing reading, writing, numeracy, and problem-solving abilities, developing independent learning strategies, developing oral communication skills, enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence, developing personal, educational, and career goals and strategies for accomplishing them, and developing life skills awareness.

In addition to the training modules and technical assistance, the Project FORWARD staff serves as mentor for teachers who choose to undertake student-generated class projects. These innovative approaches , which fall within the larger educational framework of project-based learning,, link the development of basic skills to problem solving and team work. Long popular in Europe, the approach has gained recognition in the United States, where it is linked to five slightly divergent models, each emphasizing a contextualized approach to adult education that increases learner participation in curriculum development and effectively puts adults in charge of their own learning.

1. The school to work model where learners engage in problem solving as part of a team, report the results to a group, and then are evaluated on the results. In many cases, project tasks are set up to help learners develop skills outlined by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS).

2. The whole language (or contextual) approach to basic skills development where learners work collaboratively to examine cultural or social themes that have meaning in their lives and then publish what they have produced in the forms of autobiographies, "memory books", oral histories (often video-tapes), or booklets that celebrate cultural traditions. Projects influenced by the whole language model focus largely on products that highlight shared reading and writing.

3. The communicative approach to second language teaching where learners use English in contexts beyond the classroom as they engage in a project that interest them. In addition to doing the project, participants learn to use English in various social contexts and investigate other issues related to language learning and language use in the United States.

4. The economic development model in which adult learners become involved in mini-entrepreneurship projects that allow them to develop basic skills while at the same time investigating innovative ways of using their skills. The projects explore employment opportunities and other means of gaining self-sufficiency and economic independence, either individually or as part of a group.

5. Participatory models for adult literacy in which adults examine a social, economic, or political issue of concern to themselves, their families, and their communities. As part of these projects, adults may explore possibilities for change and then take action to implement such change.

The projects that teachers and learners become part of do not always fall into one of the five categories. Rather, they exist on a continuum that reflects an emphasis on employment preparation, literacy development, language acquisition, economic development, or social change. What they all have in common is an effort to examine, explore, implement, and report on subjects of interest to students and teachers. These projects represent variations on more traditional classroom research, initiated by the classroom population and, in some cases jointly conducted with Consortium members.

A sample of the 1996 Project FORWARD Master Teacher Student Projects currently in progress are

as follows:

1. Project: Crafts Fair. The teacher is Noemi Aguilar of Socorro Independent School District, Socorro, Texas.

This EvenStart class crafts fair to show the work the students have produced in family projects. They will produce a book showing the crafts that will be available at the fair. They will also write a short biography of each student. Most of the activities will include children. The students will plan and coordinate all the activities needed for handling money, setting up booths, decorating, buying materials, and marketing.

2. Project: Family Favorite Cookbook. The teacher is Kathleen Hanlon of Region 20 Education Service Center, San Antonio, Texas.

Students at this GED/JOBS classroom will organize and carry out the activities needed to publish a Family Favorite"Cookbook. They will compile the recipes into a cookbook which will be published for distribution.

3. Project: Women and Children Caught in the Crossfire. The teacher is Judith A. Heath of the Dallas Independent School District, Dallas, Texas.

Students from this urban GED/JOBS class will conduct background research on several social issues of the 90s. Their activities will include organizing discussion groups, conducting question and answer sessions, inviting guest speakers, writing life stories, utilizing visual aids such as video/live TV commentaries, and hosting "invite a Friend" day.

4. Project: The Life and Times of Uvalde Baptist GED 1995-96. The teacher is Betty Street of the Harris County Department of Education, Houston, Texas.

Students will produce a large scrapbook and perhaps a video that will include interviews with students, success stories, poems, student writings, a study of important events of the

last fifty years, and available programs that support Uvalde Baptist GED program

VITAL

Volunteers in Training for Adult Literacy (VITAL) provides quality in-service training and technical assistance to instructors and administrators across the state. Volunteers have been a major resource in the fight against illiteracy. Texas adult basic education programs often have benefited from the services of volunteer adults. In fiscal year 1990-1991, more than 3,100 volunteers provided service to adult education programs in Texas. However, literacy groups indicate that insufficient staff and budgets of volunteer literacy programs result in limited staff development opportunities for volunteers. More than 100 Texas counties have no local literacy services, an estimated 11,000 potential adult basic education students exist for each available in Texas' metropolitan areas. Volunteer instructors are trained in the use and development of instructional methodologies and assessment strategies appropriate for an integrated, holistic approach to teaching basic literacy skills in a variety of contexts, including family and workplace literacy. The project also addresses the needs of administrators to improve management and communications skills and develop effective strategies to coordinate service delivery efforts by adult education providers state-wide.

VITAL offers three-hour modules of training that emphasize a functional holistic approach to literacy instruction. Examples of these instruction module descriptions are:

1. Dealing with Lives on the Edge: Characteristics of Adult Learners. Tutors of adult learners are often confronted with issues such as: cultural differences, financial stress, child care, transportation, different learning styles, and why it happens, and how its many side effects impact instruction. Barriers to regular attendance will be specifically addressed, and the tutor will learn how to manage his or her own and the students' expectations of progress;

2. Cooperative Learning: How to Manage More than One Student. Small-group earners benefit from peer support by sharing their successes and learning to ask for help with challenging areas. Tutors will learn the advantages of peer support, techniques for maximizing the students' growth, and the skills necessary to facilitate a small group;

3. Writing to Publish: Sharing Student Writings. Almost all literacy students want to write better and there are several things they want to write: forms, resumes, grocery lists, letters, essays, poetry, etc. The writing process is an essential part of completing most writing tasks. The tutors will learn how to help the student select a writing topic and how to teach the writing process to beginning writers. The tutors will gain skills in evaluating the student writings and will learn how to enable a student to share his or her writing with others.

THE CONSORTIUM AS A RESPONSE AGENT

In addition to attending to the projects funded under the Consortium umbrella, the partnership formed a working sub-group to address the project of writing Texas Indicators of Program Quality as mandated in the National Literacy Act of 1991. A second project, developing the Adult Education and Literacy Measures Assessment System for assessment of adults entering education and/or workplace training programs, came as a request from the Texas Council on Workforce and Economic Competitiveness. These two projects have offered the Consortium members an opportunity to work with entities outside the nine members of the Consortium. The working sub-group that wrote the Indicator of Program Quality document and the Performance Measures and Assessment System sub-group worked closely with other Texas state agencies such as the Department of Human Services, the Workforce Commission (formerly the Texas Employment Commission), the Department of Commerce, the Texas Council on Workforce and Economic Competitiveness, as well as the many literacy providers and stakeholders.

The Indicators of Program Quality

The National Literacy Act of 1991 mandated that states develop and implement Indicators of Program Quality (IPQ's) as a means of insuring that adult literacy and education learners be provided with equity and excellence in education. In response to this mandate, in 1992 the Texas State Board of Education appointed the Texas Quality Evaluation System (TQES) Task Force to develop IPQ's. During 1992-1993 the TQES Task Force, composed of representatives of all segments of adult literacy and education providers, developed a set of indicators. These were presented to the State Board of Education which approved them in June 1993. Following their approval the indicators are being implemented in the field as the standards by which programs are guided and evaluated.

To insure wide representation of adult literacy and education stakeholders on the Texas Quality Evaluation System Task Force which would develop the Indicators of Program Quality, the Task Force consisted of forty-two representatives. These included members from (a) community based organizations, (b) the state and local literacy councils, (c) state volunteer literacy organizations, (d) local education agencies or school districts, including the Texas Department of Criminal Justice school system, (e) community college and university systems and campuses, (f) county departments of education and regional education service centers, (g) governmental agencies such as a city, sheriff's department, and housing authority, and (h) various state level entities including, the Texas State Library, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Texas Department of Commerce, Texas Department of Human Services, and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Seven areas comprise the Texas Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education and Literacy Programs: Learner Outcomes, Program Planning, Recruitment of Educationally Disadvantaged and Other Undereducated Adults, Curriculum and Instruction, Support Services for Educationally

Disadvantaged and Other Undereducated Adults, Professional Development, and Student Retention.

To illustrate the IPQ's developed by the Task Force, what follows is the text of the Indicators document for one of the seven areas:

Area: Professional Development

1. Collaborative Planning Based on Proficiencies. Professional development is collaboratively planned based on a set of instructional proficiencies and is related to assesses needs and stated program outcomes.

This means that:

·professional development is a process of constant renewal and improvement;

·collaborative planning includes planing with staff;

·Collaborative planning includes input from students;

·professional development includes a comprehensive menu of resources approach, including but not limited to, workshops, conferences, institutes, college courses, and self-directed professional development; and

·professional development provides for the acquisition of new proficiencies, the practice of these proficiencies, and the use of a systematic plan for follow-up.

Measure: (a) Evidence indicates a professional development plan based on collaborative needs assessment data for administrative and instructional personnel.

Measure: (b) Evidence indicates implementation to provide for individual professional development needs by providing a comprehensive menu of staff development resources.

2. Consistent with Holistic Instruction. The plan for staff development and professional

growth is consistent with and supportive of a holistic, learner-centered instructional program.

This means that:

·professional development planning is based on a holistic instructional philosophy of adult learning; and

·professional development planning is based on assessed student needs and stated program outcomes.

Measure: (a) Evidence indicates that the professional development plan and activities reflect a holistic, learner-centered instructional philosophy of education.

Measure: (b) Evidence indicates that professional development contributes to continuous student progress.

As can be seen from this example, the TQES Task Force, in developing the Indicators of Program Quality, endeavored to clarify them by adding "This means that" statements providing elaboration of IPQ's and "Measure" statements indicating evidence appropriate for determining implementation of IPQ's.

Following the adoption of the Texas Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education and Literacy Programs by the State Board of Education in June 1993, efforts focused on implementation of the IPQ's. The first phase of implementation included the development of two sets of proficiencies, Adult Education Instructor Proficiencies and Adult Education Administrator Proficiencies, based on the IPQ's.

These proficiencies were piloted as the basis for professional development offered through the

Adult Education Professional Development and Curriculum Consortium. The Consortium, composed of a community based organization, a multi-county cooperative of adult education providers, a regional education service center, two- and four-year colleges, and universities, continues to serve as the main provider of professional development for Adult Education Act funded programs in the state of Texas. All workshops, institutes, technical assistance, conference presentations, and the like offered by the Consortium from 1993-94 onward have been grounded in the Texas Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education and Literacy Programs.

Intended to be implemented over multiple years, the Indicators of Program Quality for Texas were initially disseminated by the Adult Education Professional Development and Curriculum Consortium and the Texas Education Agency's Division of Adult and Community Education during 1993-1994 and 1994-1995. The State Board of Education Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy based its 1995 policy recommendations contained in comprehensive report Adult Literacy: A Texas Priority in large part on the Indicators. The program year 1995-1996 is the "benchmark year" for calibrating accountability standards to those set by the Indicators of Program Quality. Thus, the standards set in the Indicators of Program Quality have become a driving force in policies and practice in Texas adult literacy and education programs.

The Adult Education and Literacy Performance Assessment System

The Texas Council for Workforce and Economic Competitiveness (TCWEC) asked TEA to take the leadership role in defining performance measures and developing an assessment system for determining progress of adult education and literacy program participants in the Texas workforce development system. TEA, in turn, funded the Consortium to design such a system. The Consortium sub-group began work on the project in the fall of 1994 and anticipates completion of the first of three phases by spring 1996. Completion of the entire system is tentatively scheduled for fall 1996.

The design and direction of the system includes assessment of the literacy proficiencies of adults for appropriate referral and placement into an adult education and literacy program, further diagnostic assessment of learners' strengths and needs, and on-going assessment of learner progress. This system will accommodate the needs of adults who plan to participate in Texas' workforce training programs who are enrolled or will enroll in any of the variety of adult education and literacy programs in the state.

The National Adult Literacy survey (NALS) conducted by the Educational Testing Service is a major resource for the adult education and literacy system, which will be based on its multidimensional design. The Performance Measure Assessment System for Adult Education and Literacy will be structured on a NALS-like format, but will attempt to better address the strengths and literacy needs of Texas' diverse population, including the linguistic diversity and literacy needs of limited English proficient adults. In addition, the design will permit valid assessment results for adults who may be non-literate or marginally literate and the use of alternative assessment strategies and tools that reveal strengths of adult learners.

The assessment system will be contain three components: An intake assessment tool that will yield valid results for referral of clients entering the Texas workforce system; appropriate diagnostic instruments for individuals being referred to adult education and literacy programs; and appropriate assessment instruments for the ongoing assessment of learner progress through the adult education and literacy program, including readiness for transition to job training, a job, or post secondary education.

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since its formation, the Consortium members have met regularly, typically once every one or two months, but more often as new projects or consortium issues have required. Most of the

consortium participants had worked together on literacy projects prior of the formation of a formal consortium, but the formation of a formal partnership of institutions brought together as a structured, project-driven group was new. The development of the partnership has been a process of trial-and-error. Several observations for those who would use this consortium model would be to seek out people or groups of people who are currently doing similar work and bring them together; there is a synergy to be found in collaboration. This collaboration has been enhanced by bringing together professionals who work with similar populations but who come from somewhat different backgrounds; they bring a variety and diversity of expertise that enhances the synergy. The cross-fertilization of ideas and methodologies is particularly rich.

Prospective consortium members should know in advance that some conflict and disagreement is part of the process, and all parties must agree that there is an unwritten code about how to handle conflict...professionally and with respect. Keep communication lines open and include all of the partners in decision making. Regular meetings, complete with agendas and structure, help keep all of the partners involved in the issues and projects and make it possible to progress on task.

As with any working partnership, flexibility and willingness to self-correct is critical. During the first year of the Consortium, the members agreed that we needed to hire a liaison for scheduling and coordinating the professional development component. After the liaison was hired, it became apparent that each member had its contacts among practitioners and its own system for scheduling professional development trainings. Had the liaison taken on the task of scheduling for trainings as was originally planned, this would have introduced a layer of confusion. In fact, the Consortium has discovered that it needs a liaison more as a disseminator of information, a first contact point for literacy groups in need of information about professional development, and especially as the one member of the group who has an overview of the status of all of the projects. As well, the liaison is the resource person for research and the current status of national and international literacy issues. As the group enters its first formal evaluation phase, it is clear that the liaison must serve as point person in managing the evaluation process. Clearly, the selection of the person to be

liaison is a critical one; this job requires excellent research skills and a thorough knowledge of the field, but the liaison must also have superior people skills in leadership, consensus building, and negotiation.

Several important recommendations emerge as this group enters its third year. It was important for the group to work through the process of developing and articulating together an educational philosophy based on values as well as research. The theory and practice that drives our work has resulted in a coherence on projects such as the Indicators of Program Quality. The process of developing and negotiating the indicators was often tedious and repetitious work, but the process itself was of great value in helping to articulate standards. A second recommendation for prospective consortium members is to build in adequate time for reflection throughout the life of the partnership, but it is especially important in the early stages. Reflection allows for, and perhaps eases the way for, necessary and inevitable change in the organization because it tends to encourage an open learning environment. Members must feel comfortable questioning the status quo and recommending change.

The issues and problems that the Consortium faces now continue to revolve around inadequate funding and an audience that is far larger than this small group can serve. We must grapple with new ways of offering professional development to programs that are culturally diverse, whose teachers are significantly underpaid, and whose clients are widely scattered geographically. The Consortium will continue to work with outside entities on projects such as the adult education assessment system, continue to deliver professional development, create new materials, and pursue special projects for the remainder of the funding cycle. As a group, we must begin to develop procedures and decision-making protocols for choosing the projects we undertake and the partnerships we forge with other agencies. Indeed, the Consortium may need to confront the question of whether it will continue to operate as an intact consortium or evolve into an alternate group or groups.

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APPENDIX A

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